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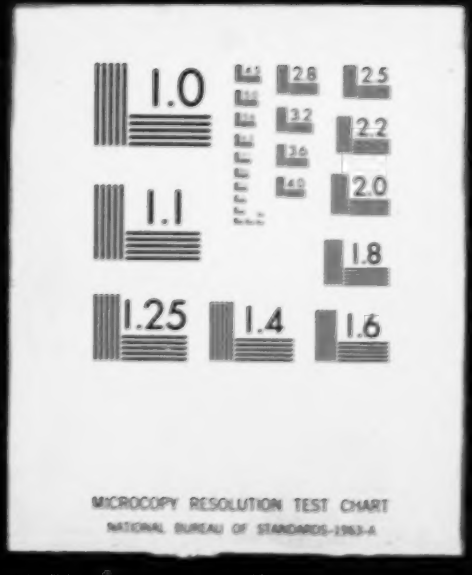

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ABSTRACT

Developed by the Oregon Elementary English Project, this curriculum unit intended for grades three and four aims to (1) help students become aware of some of the sounds of the language; (2) help students discover how some of these sounds are pronounced; and (3) help students understand that with a limited number of sounds they can produce an unlimited number of words. Lesson 1 introduces students to the study of sounds by having them isolate some of the various sounds of English. Lesson 2 explains how the positions of teeth, lips, and tongue affect some of the sounds. Lesson 3 reinforces the concept that combined sounds produce words, and, finally, lesson 4 helps students discover both those sounds produced by forcing air through the nasal cavity and those produced by forcing it through a very narrow opening in the mouth. Each lesson is accompanied by a statement of its purpose, suggested procedures and materials, possible extensions, and student exercises. A packet of supplementary materials to be used in conjunction with some of the lessons is also provided. (See related documents CS 200 482-487, and CS 200 489-499.) (HS)

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Language Curriculum, Levels C - D

Unit V

THE SOUNDS OF LANGUAGE

Developed under contract with the
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CS 200 455

Unit V
The Sounds of Language

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Unit V

THE SOUNDS OF LANGUAGE
(four lessons)

CHECKLIST OF MATERIAL NEEDED:

1. Student lesson filed separately for lesson 1.

2. The following material in the Supplementary Material envelope:

   exercise material to be put on the overhead, the board, or dittoed and passed out to each student for lessons 2, 3,and 4.

   chart of organs of speech to be made into a transparency and used on the overhead, or otherwise reproduced, for use in lessons 2 and 4

PURPOSE:

1. To help students become aware of some of the sounds they use in pronouncing their language.

2. To help students discover how some of these sounds are produced.

3. (for more mature students) To help students understand that with a limited number of sounds we can produce an unlimited number of words.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHING THIS UNIT:

When we pronounce language we make use of a set of distinct sounds, called the sounds of speech. Humans are capable of producing hundreds of different sounds, but they make use of only a small number of these to pronounce the words of any one language. When babies begin to babble in preparation for learning language, they make many sounds which they will not be able to make later in their lives. They begin by using their vocal apparatus quite freely, making many sounds. Gradually, as they acquire the language being spoken around them, they quit making the sounds not used in that language and from then on it becomes quite difficult for them to make these sounds.

Not all languages make use of the same sounds. For example, the two th sounds in English are quite rare in other languages of the world. The sound spelled ch in the German words Bach and nicht do not occur in English, but do occur in many languages. Some languages make use of a great many sounds. Those spoken in the Caucacus Mountains of Russia

make use of the most, probably about 80 different sounds. The Hawaiian language uses only 15 different sounds. English is average in number of sounds used, making use of from 45 - 60, depending on the dialect spoken.

The sounds of language are produced by the passage of air from the lungs up through the throat and out through either the mouth or the nose. The kinds of sounds that are produced depend on various things that happen to the air on the way out, and this is controlled by the various so-called organs of speech: the larynx (or voice box or Adam's apple, as it is sometimes called), the tongue, teeth, lips, nasal passage, and shape of the mouth. For example, if the vocal cords in the larynx vibrate as the air passes through, the sounds which are produced are said to be voiced. These include the sounds we spell with a, e, i, o, u, y, b, d, g, j, l, m, n, r, v, w, and z. The other sounds are not voiced. Some sounds are produced by stopping the flow of air entirely. This is true of sounds spelled p, b, d, t, g, and k. Other sounds are produced by forcing the air through a very small opening, thus producing a kind of hissing sound. Examples of such sounds are those spelled with f, v, s, and z. The vowel sounds are produced, not by stopping or inhibiting the flow of air, but by the position of the tongue and to some extent the shape of the mouth and the rounding of the lips. Some differences in sounds are produced by whether the muscles of the mouth are tense or lax. For example, let and late are the same except for the tenseness involved in late. Three sounds, those spelled with the m, n, and ng, are produced by air being forced through the nose rather than the mouth, by the velum, which is the small fold of skin that hangs down in the back of the throat. Various other factors also influence the differences between one sound and another. The result is that each individual sound is produced by a variety of factors operating together, so that in at least one way it differs from each of the other sounds. Very few of the factors involved in the production of sound are introduced in the student lessons.

Though any one language uses only a relatively small number of individual sounds, these sounds are used together so as to be able to produce an unlimited number of words. No matter how many words there are, it is possible to combine sounds in some new way to create new words. Even five years ago linguists used /bik/ as a nonsense word to illustrate some properties of language. Now this group of sounds has been used as a product name (Bic) and can no longer by used as a nonsense word. The process of creating new words goes on in languages continually. It should be said that new words are produced according to certain rules which we know only below the level of consciousness. For example, in English it is not possible to combine p and f together in one syllable, though it can be done in some other languages. As with other aspects of language, humans learn to hear and to produce the sounds of their own language without being aware of exactly how they do so.

In talking about the sounds of language it is important for both you and your students to realize that sounds and letters are not the same thing. Letters do not have sounds. Letters are symbols for sounds. Language is a spoken phenomenon before it is written, and many of the languages. of the world have never been written, though they are all spoken. In fact, knowing a language implies knowing how to pronounce it.

Because our alphabet has only 26 letters and English has from 45 - 60 sounds, there isn't a one-to-one correspondence between the sounds of English and the alphabet. For example, one letter sometimes spells two sounds as does the x in fox, which represents the sounds /ks/. Sometimes one letter is used to represent two different sounds. For example, the double f in off represents the sound /f/ but the letter f in of represents the sound /v/. And the a in father spells a different sound than it does in bad. In order to talk about all the sounds, therefore, it is sometimes necessary to devise a system of symbols in which each symbol represents only one possible sound. Various phonetic alphabets have been invented for this purpose. Some have been devised for the teaching of new writing systems or for the teaching of reading. You are probably familiar with the Initial Teaching Alphabet (ITA) which is an alphabet where there is a one-to-one correspondence between sound and symbol.

TEACHING THE UNIT:

There are four lessons in this unit. Only the first two are designed for third graders. It is intended that all four of the lessons can be used for fourth graders and more mature students. Adapt the unit to your own group. The unit is intended simply as an initial exposure to some of the concepts. They will be reinforced in later years.

The sounds which are discussed in the unit have been carefully selected. They are all consonant sounds which are fairly easy to isolate and to describe, and which can be represented by the letters of the alphabet. Thus, it is not necessary for our purposes to devise a phonetic alphabet with a set of symbols so that each sound has its own symbol. We simply use the letters that stand for the sounds. When it is necessary to distinguish between a sound and a letter in writing, sounds are identified by slash lines. Letters are underlined. For example, /f/ stands for the sound and f stands for the letter.

As you teach the lessons of the unit, try to let students experiment with sounds and discover by themselves, as much as possible, how they are produced. Although there are some written exercises in most lessons, the primary emphasis should be on sound. Make it an enjoyable experience and approach it in the spirit of investigation and discovery. It is yet another way to show students how much they already know about their language.

You will find the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, (The American Heritage Publishing Co. and Houghton Mifflin, New York, 1969) a very useful reference for this unit. Although the large hardbound edition is expensive, you will find it much more useful for this and other aspects of language study, than the less expensive paperback edition which omits many of the more valuable features.

LET'S TAKE WORDS APART

PURPOSE:

To introduce students to the study of the sounds of language by having them isolate some of the sounds of English.

MATERIAL:

Student lesson "Let's Take Words Apart," to be passed out to each student and used as a worksheet.

SUGGESTED PROCEDURE:

1. Begin with a discussion of taking things apart to find out what they are made of. Ask questions such as:

   Have you ever taken anything apart? Old toys? Old clocks? Motors?

   Do you like to take things apart? Why?

   What can you find out when you take things apart? (What they are made of and maybe how they work.)

   Are all clocks made of the same kinds of parts?

2. To focus attention on taking words apart, use the following riddle:

   I know something that has parts that can be taken apart and studied. You can't see it, you can't feel it, you can't smell it, and you can't taste it. What do you think it is?

   If any students realize you didn't say "you can't hear it," they may come up with language or some aspect of language. If not, tell them. Then discuss what they think they will find if they take language apart. Through questioning lead them to sounds as one part of language. They have already learned that language has sentences, and they are aware of words as parts that have meaning, that can be put together to make sentences, and that can be pronounced. You can review these ideas and then ask

   When you pronounce words, what do you do? (Make sounds.)

   When you hear words, what do you hear? (Sounds.)

3. Ask

   What are some of the sounds we use when we pronounce words? (Let students experiment and think about distinct sounds and make suggestions for a little while.)

   Then help them understand that sounds and letters are two different things. Point out that we use letters to stand for sounds, and explain that sometimes we need a way to show when we are talking about a letter and when we are talking about the sound.

4. Pass out the student worksheet and work through the first section with your students, making sure they understand the difference in the notation for sound and letter. You might want to have a little oral drill by putting first a letter (underlined) and then the corresponding sound (with slash lines) on the board and having students tell you which it is, sound or letter.

   Have students work section A individually and then compare and discuss their answers. Emphasis at all times should be on the sounds. If they have trouble, have them say the words slowly.

5. Have students complete section B either as a class, in pairs, or in groups. It could be done as an individual assignment, but students will probably profit from working together so that they can pronounce the words for each other and listen. Discuss their answers and ask

   What six sounds did you find? (/p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /f/, /v/)

   Are there other sounds in these words? (Yes.)

   Are there other sounds in your language? (Yes.)

POSSIBLE EXTENSION:

Have students make up some tongue twisters in which they use words beginning with the same sound (Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers, for example). Put their products together in a booklet.

The Sounds of Language
Lesson 1
Student

Language C - D

LET'S TAKE WORDS APART

When we write words we use letters. When we say words we use sounds. Here is how we write the letters in the word dog:

d o g

Here is how we show the sounds in the word dog:

/d/ /o/ /g/

The little slanting lines show that we mean sounds, not letters.
The sound at the beginning of dog is /d/.
The letter at the beginning of dog is d.

To write the sound at the beginning of girl you write _____.

To write the letter at the beginning of girl you write _____.

A. Write the sounds and letters asked for below. The first ones are done for you.

word	beginning sound	beginning letter
fox rat mouse boy head jet	/f/	f

word	ending sound	ending letter
bed stop roar pan bus cat	/d/	d

B. Fill in the blanks and answer the questions below:

1.

words	sounds	
pig	.. /i/ /g/	
pan	___ /a/ /n/	What sound do you find
pal	___ /a/ /l/	in all of these words? _____
top	/t/ /o/ ___	

2.

words	sounds	
big	___ /i/ /g/	What sound do you find in
bat	___ /a/ /t/	both of these words? ___

3.

words	sounds	
top	___ /o/ /p/	What sound do you find
bat	/b/ /a/ ___	in both of these words? _____

4.

words	sounds	
dig	___ /i/ /g/	What sound do you find in
pad	/p/ /a/ ___	all of these words? _____
dog	___ /o/ /g/	

5.

words	sounds	
fig	___ /i/ /g/	What sound do you find
fat	___ /a/ /t/	in all of these words? _____
if	/i/ ___	

6.

words	sounds	
van	___ /a/ /n/	What sound do you find in
vim	___ /i/ /m/	both of these words? ___

HOW DO WE MAKE DIFFERENT SOUNDS?

PURPOSE:

To help students discover that some of the sounds of English are produced by positions of the teeth, lips, and tongue.

MATERIAL:

Student worksheet "How Do We Make Different Sounds?" to be put on overhead or board, or dittoed and passed out to each student for use as a worksheet, in Supplementary Material.

A diagram of the organs of speech to be made into a transparency for the overhead or otherwise reproduced, in the Supplementary Materials envelope.

SUGGESTED PROCEDURE:

1. Review the main points of lesson 1 (language can be taken apart; one of the parts is sounds.)

   Put the six sounds isolated in lesson 1 on the board:

   /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /f/, /v/

   Ask

   Are there other sounds in our language? (You may wishto tell them how many: depending on the dialect, there are from 45 to 60 different sounds.)

   How do you suppose we make so many different sounds? (Allow students to offer suggestions.)

2. Put the worksheet on the overhead or board, or pass out individual copies to students. Use it to help students discover that we use different parts of the mouth in different ways to produce different sounds. Explain that they are to pronounce the words in each group and try to discover what they do to make the sound indicated. Then they are to answer the question(s) about making the sound. This could be done as a class, or students could work in groups or pairs. Discuss their answers afterwards. They should discover that

1. Their lips are together when they form /p/ and /b/.

2. Their tongues are against their top teeth when they pronounce /t/ and /d/.

3. Their top teeth touch their bottom lips when they make /f/ and /v/.

3. If students have not already mentioned it, help them discover that the sounds are grouped in pairs by the way they are produced. Ask

   How are /p/ and /b/ alike?

   What other pairs are alike? (/t/ and /d/, and /f/ and /v/)

   Then help them discover the difference between the two sounds in each pair by asking

   How are /p/ and /b/--and /t/ and /d/, and /f/ and /v/--different?

   After students have offered a few suggestions, help them discover that in /b/, /d/ and /v/ the vocal cords are vibrating--that is, they are using their voice when they make these sounds. In the others they are not.

   To help students discover this difference, have them place their fingers on their Adam's apple and pronounce the individual pairs. They will be able to feel the vibration of the vocal cords with the voiced sounds.

   An alternative is to have them place their hands over their ears. When they pronounce the voiced sounds they will be able to hear the sound in their ears.

4. Show the diagram of the speech organs and point out the location of the tongue, teeth, lips, and the Adam's apple (larynx).

   Summarize what students have learned by asking them the following questions:

   Which two sounds are made with the lips? (/p/ and /b/)

   Which of these uses the vocal cords? (/b/) And which does not? (/p/)

Which two sounds are made with the tongue against the teeth? (/t/ and /d/)

Which of these uses the vocal cords? (/d/) And which does not? (/t/)

Which sounds are made with the top teeth and the lower lips? (/f/ and /v/)

Which of these uses the vocal cords? (/v/) And which does not? (/f/)

POSSIBLE EXTENSION:

Have students bring small mirrors and have them watch in the mirror as they make various sounds and then describe what they observe.

LET'S BUILD SOME WORDS

PURPOSE:

To reinforce the concept that we combine sounds to pronounce words.

MATERIAL:

Student worksheet "Let's Build Some Words," in Supplementary Materials envelope, to use on overhead, on board, or to ditto and and pass out to each student.

SUGGESTED PROCEDURE:

1. Remind students that by taking things apart we learn what they are made of but that we also make new things by putting certain kinds of parts together. Review what they have learned about some of the sounds used in pronouncing words. Then tell them that they can use sounds to make new words. Suppose they want another word for desk. What could they do? (Use another word they already know. Mix up the sounds and call it a sked or a keds. Or make up an entirely new word, such as fip or ged. These are all things they can do, without anyone teaching them how.)

2. Put the worksheet on the overhead or board, or pass out individual copies to students. Have them construct new words using the sounds listed on the worksheet, plus any sounds they wish to combine them with. This activity should convince them that sounds can be put together to construct words and that they already know how to use the sounds of their language.

   If students work in groups, have the groups share their words with each other, and discuss some of the sounds used.

   Ask

   > Are there other sounds in English besides the ones you used in your new words? (There probably are. It is doubtful they will use all of the 45 - 60 sounds of English.)
   >
   > How many words do you think could be invented in this way? (An unlimited number.)

   If students have done lesson 14 in Unit IV, which deals with making compound words and using affixes, point out that making up new words entirely as they have done in this lesson is another way we get new words.

WHY SOUNDS ARE DIFFERENT

PURPOSE:

To help students discover that some sounds are produced by forcing the air through the nasal cavity, and others by forcing it through a very narrow opening in the mouth.

MATERIAL:

Student worksheet "Why Sounds Are Different" to be put on overhead, or board, or dittoed and handed out to each student to use as a worksheet, in Supplementary Material envelope.

Chart of organs of speech to use on overhead or board, in Supplementary Materials envelope

SUGGESTED PROCEDURE:

1. Review with students what they discovered about making the sounds /p/ and /b/; /t/ and /d/; and /f/ and /v/: They are formed by using the lips and teeth or tongue in different ways and by using or not using the vocal cords. Then put the sounds they used in lesson 3 on the board:

   /f/, /v/, /s/, /z/, /m/, /n/

   Let students experiment a bit and try to explain how these sounds are alike and different. Ask

   What comes up from your lungs and through your throat when you talk? (Air.)

   What happens to the air when it leaves the throat?

   Have students pronounce several vowel sounds, such as those in top, hat, rope, Then ask

   What happens to the air when you pronounce these sounds? (It passes through the mouth and out.)

   Then have them pronounce the /v/, /f/, /s/, and /z/ sounds.

   What happens to the air in these sounds that is different? (It makes a sort of hissing sound as it leaves the mouth.)

   Why do you think this happens? (Parts of the mouth are very close together and the air has to be forced out through a narrow opening.)

2. After students have experimented a little with how the air is forced out of the mouth, ask

   Do you think air always passes through the mouth when we are making sounds?

   Hold your nose and say "My nose is all stopped up." What sounds in these words sounded funny? (/m/ and /n/)

   Have them repeat the following words and see if they can decide where the air goes: man, mouse, mother, nice, noisy, nothing, or you could just have them pronounce the sounds /m/ and /n/. (When these sounds are produced the air passes through the nose instead of through the mouth.)

3. Put the exercise on the overhead; or if you dittoed it, pass it out, and have students fill in the boxes, either by telling you what to write or by working in groups with individual worksheets. They should discover that in the first four sounds the air is nearly cut off, with /f/ and /v/ by the teeth against the lips and with /s/ and /z/ by the teeth and tongue, but it does pass through the mouth. With /m / and /n/ the air is forced through the nose.

4. Conclude the lesson by putting the transparency of the organs of speech from lesson 2 on the overhead and showing students where the flow of air goes in producing these sounds. If the velum is relaxed, the air will flow out through the nose. In the other sounds it will be raised until it touches the back of the throat, causing the air to flow through the mouth.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL FOR UNIT V

"The Sounds of Language"

Language C - D

This envelope contains the following:

1. Worksheets to be put on the overhead or the board, or dittoed and handed out to each student for Lessons 2, 3, and 4.

2. Chart of organs of speech to be made into a transparency and used on the overhead or otherwise reproduced for use in Lessons 2 and 4.

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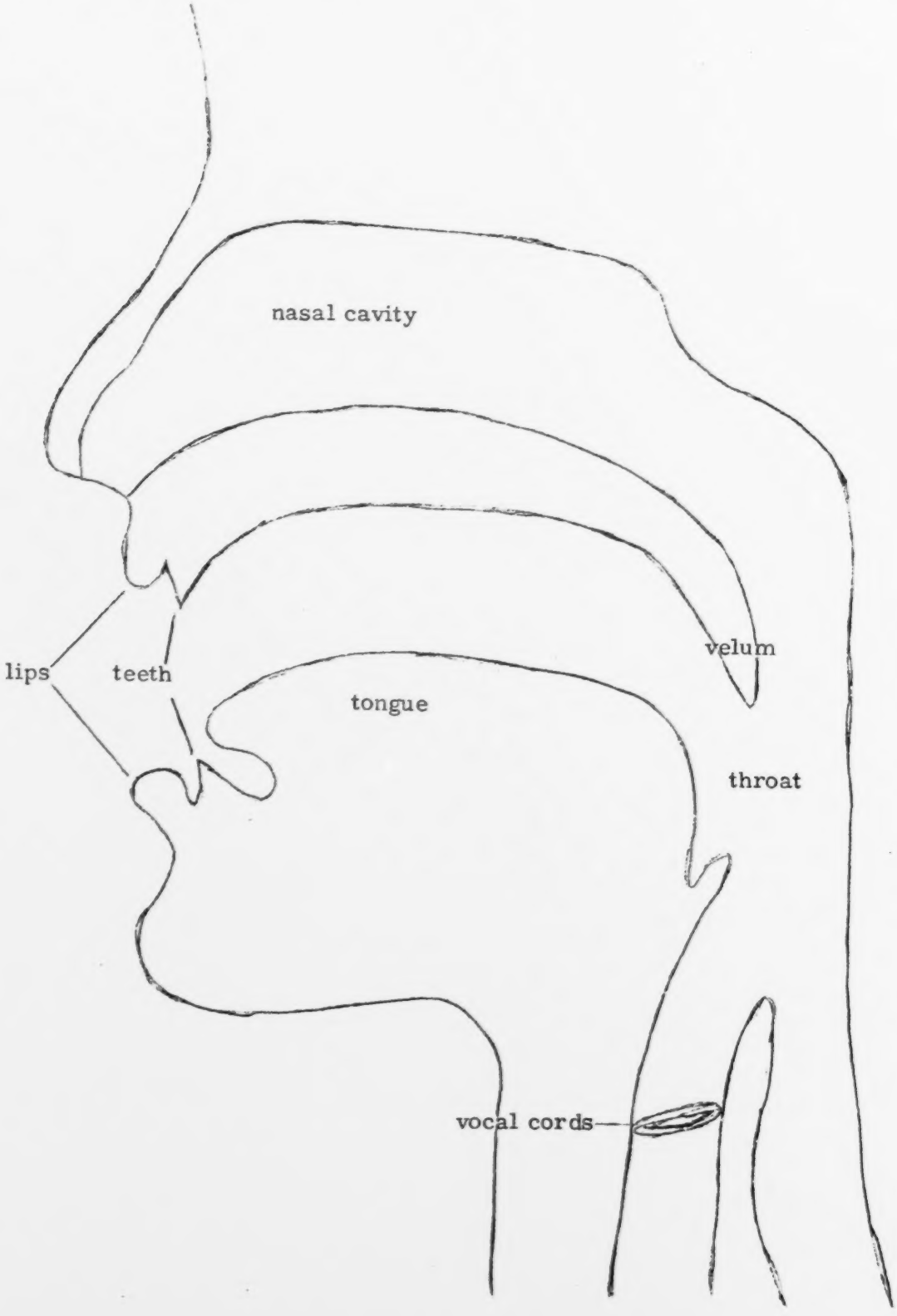
The Sounds of Language
Lessons 2 and 4
Chart of Organs of Speech
Supplementary Material



The Sounds of Language
Lesson 2
Supplementary Material

Language C - D

How Do We Make Different Sounds?

sound	words	
/p/	pig pan pal top	What are your lips doing when you say /p/?
/b/	big bat box	What are your lips doing when you say /b/?
/t/	top bat fat	Where is your tongue when you say /t/?
/d/	dig dog pad	Where is your tongue when you say /d/?
/f/	fig fat if	What are your lips doing when you say /f/?
/v/	van vim cave	What are your lips doing when you say /v/?

The Sounds of Language
Lesson 3
Supplementary Material

Language D

LET'S BUILD SOME WORDS

Make up some new words using these sounds. Combine them with any other sounds you wish. Make as many words as you wish for each sound.

sound	words you make up
/f/	
/v/	
/m/	
/n/	
/s/	
/z/	

The Sounds of Language
Lesson 4
Supplementary Material

Language D

WHY SOUNDS ARE DIFFERENT

sound	Is the air flow nearly cut off?	Does air pass through mouth or nose?
/f/		
/v/		
/s/		
/z/		
/m/		
/n/		